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ABSTRACT

According to their personal points of view regarding United States politics, a panel of foreign correspondents from other nations evaluated the United States electoral process and discussed the difficulties involved in conveying the complexities of this process to an audience. This document contains an edited transcript of the panel's comments. Moderated by Martin Agronsky of Washington, D.C., the panel consisted of correspondents from Japan, England, Russia, and Germany. The following topics were discussed: the realism of press coverage of political issues, the interrelationship of predictions and results in elections, personalities of candidates, Richard Nixon as a product of the electoral system, the effectiveness of political speeches, and a comparison of United States politics with that of the countries represented on the panel. (MAI)

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A Foreign Correspondent's View of the U.S. Electoral Process

Plenary Session, AEJ Annual Convention
University of Maryland, August 1976

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Edited by
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School of Journalism
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International Communication Division
Association for Education in Journalism

Preface

The Executive Committee of the International Communication Division takes particular pride in presenting Division members with this edited transcript of the plenary program sponsored by the Division at the Annual Convention of the Association for Education in Journalism in 1976.

Special thanks are due Prof. L. John Martin, University of Maryland, without whose help the program would not have been possible, and Jean Cousin, graduate student, Michigan State University, who transcribed the tape.

This is the fourth major publication produced by the Division, and additional copies may be obtained for $2.00 each by writing the editor at the School of Journalism, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Mary A. Gardner, Editor
Head, International Communication
Division, 1976-77

The Participants

Presiding

L. John Martin, University of Maryland

Moderator

Martin Agronsky, WETA, Washington, D.C.

Panel

Yukio Matsuyama, *Asahi Shimbun*
John Midgley, London *Economist*
Vladimir Vashedchenko, TASS
Carl Weise, German TV (ZDF)

A Foreign Correspondent's View of the U.S. Electoral Process

L. John Martin: If an introduction is intended to make an unknown person better known, then Martin Agronsky ought to be introducing me to you. Any American who watches television has seen him and knows him, and not many Americans fail to watch television these days.

Martin Agronsky is a graduate of Rutgers University, and those of us in journalism education will be pleased to learn that he's worked with all the networks, and in educational television. Currently, he is the moderator on "The Evening Edition with Martin Agronsky" on the Public Broadcasting Service, although he tells me he is in the process of developing a new program. He's won the Peabody Award, the Alfred I. Dupont Award, and the American Newspaper Guild Award. You name it, and he's won it in the field of reporting. It is a pleasure to present Mr. Martin Agronsky, who will introduce the members of the panel.

Agronsky: The subject as outlined is, "The Foreign Correspondent's View of the United States Electoral Process." That's a general topic, and my colleagues and I would like to do two things.

We will look at the electoral process—how, from their points of view, they think the American process works. And we will look at it from another point of view. When they write for their paper or television network or magazine, whatever it may be, do they find it difficult to communicate the various nuances, the complexities of our system? Do they find analogies that are understandable to the people who quote them?

Now, we are fortunate to have a very distinguished panel of correspondents. Let me introduce them.

Yukio Matsuyama is the American bureau chief of one of the largest dailies in the world, *The Asahi Shimbun of Japan*. Mr. Matsuyama

covered Washington from 1961-66, worked for its New York bureau from 1971-74, and now is its chief correspondent in the United States. He is a graduate of Tokyo University's Law School, a lawyer, and the author of a book on Japanese and American relations.

John Midgley is the American editor of the *London Economist*. He's lived in this country for some 12 years. He is married to an American, Elizabeth Midgley, who you might like to know is a Washington producer for CBS Weekend News. Mr. Midgley, a graduate of Cambridge University, was the foreign editor of the *Economist* from 1956-63. He has been a *London Times* editorial writer, a difficult occupation, and its correspondent in Bonn, Germany. He has had experience in many fields of writing. He has broadcast on American international affairs in Britain, Germany, and the United States. And he was honored this year by the Queen with the title "Commander of the Order of the British Empire."

The distinguished Soviet colleague with us, Vladimir Vashedchenko, has been chief of the TASS bureau here for about 12 years. He also has been its correspondent in Canada and Britain and now, having served almost 30 years abroad for TASS, he'll be returning to the Soviet Union after the election.

My West German colleague, Carl Weiss, has been chief correspondent for German Television (ZDF) in North America since last year. He's worked for German television in the Far East and as their London correspondent. For a bit he left the business to become the German press attache in New Delhi, India, and then in Jakarta. Mr. Weiss began his bureau career with the *Neue Zeitung*, the American forces newspaper for Germany. He also is the author of a book on Indonesia.

Now, I'd like all of my colleagues to begin by taking a look at the American electoral process. Do they think that it is a good process? For example, this is the first time that we've had so many primaries on the Democratic side. And the process produced a former governor of Georgia, a peanut farmer, a self-described, twice-born Christian or re-born Christian, a gentleman who was little known in this country. I'd be interested in hearing what my foreign colleagues' feelings are about the processes that produced this man and their feelings about the man himself. And I'd like to know how they are reporting it back home. We might begin with the Soviet Union's correspondent.

Vashedchenko: Quite recently, I have returned from the Soviet Union where I spent a month at the Black Sea and played tennis everyday. Many people asked me who would be the next president of the United States. And, not without hesitation, I answered that, in my estimation, President Ford had less than a 50 per cent chance to win in November.

Agronsky: When did you say that?

Vashedchenko: Well, about a month ago. Now, of course, a great interest exists in my country about the presidental election campaign. There's a degree of concern about the future of Soviet-American relations: How the change of administration will occur, how it will influence the relations between our two countries, and what influence it will have on world affairs in general. I would say that the U.S. election campaign so far has had an adverse effect on its domestic and foreign politics, making it turn to the Right. Because of Governor Reagan's stance, President Ford submitted the largest military budget in this country's history. This year, the Pentagon got what it wanted and even more.

I ask, who needs a nuclear arms race? Both countries, my country and your country, have huge arsenals which are more than enough to destroy each other. What is the advantage of increasing the number of these very costly weapons? And these new weapons, as we know, are very, very expensive. So one of the unfortunate circumstances of this election campaign is that it has produced an atmosphere, a favorable condition, for increases in arms spending. Voices are now heard in the United States talking about the development of new systems of weapons that are very, very effective. And the general atmosphere now in this country makes it quite possible that new weapons will be produced and new money given to those who will dedicate them to a new arms race. More weapons do not make it safer. And most important, these new weapons are too expensive for both our countries.

Now, another aspect of the election campaign, as I see it. President Ford and his administration, I think, backed off a bit from the policy of *detente*, of development of relations between our two countries. I found it strange when it was announced that *detente* was a bad word and should not be used. For me it was a bad sign that because of the competitive pressures of the election campaign, the trends of foreign policy seemed to be changing.

What does this mean? If you have lots of weapons, you are very strong? Does it mean that by using this force you will press the Soviet Union? In recent years, Soviet-American relations have proved that it is better to solve difficult problems not by confrontation, but negotiation. And we have experienced very difficult problems, but both countries have managed to handle them properly.

Now, this refusal, technically, to continue support for the policy of *detente* will not result in political dividends for President Ford. And, as the first half of the primaries indicate, he is suffering heavy losses in Texas especially because he did not support the foreign policy which the administration has supported and conducted for the past two or three years. And so after the defeat in Texas, he stated, and I was at that news conference in the White House, that in the future, he will use different tactics and strategies in the election campaign. He said

he would stress positiveness in his bid for election—that this administration had managed to cure the economic condition of the country, and that it had brought integrity to the White House. So the second half of the primary campaign is already being held under different slogans. I think it was a bit late, however, when President Ford realized that not defending his achievements in foreign and domestic politics was the wrong approach.

Now, much depends how this campaign evolves. Of course after Kansas City, where I will be present, it will take a different course. I expect Ford will be the nominee and the convention will approve him. Then on the second part of this election campaign, I think more attention will be concentrated on economics, or the domestic problems of this country.

Agronsky: Who do you think will be President Ford's running mate?

Vashedchenko: It's very difficult to say, but my guess is that John Connally will be. I think President Ford needs the support of the South and Connally is the man who can help in that matter.

So I think that the controversy about foreign policy will not be as pressing as it is now, and it will become more reasonable. In conclusion, I will say that people in my country are watching very carefully how the election will go, who will enter the White House and what kind of policy he will conduct, especially in relation to the Soviet Union. And the Soviet Union position is the old one. The Soviet Union is trying to develop relations between our two countries politically and, most important, in the military field. Because military costs are getting too expensive, both countries, my country and your country, are interested in checking the arms race, and in developing economic relations in the scientific and cultural fields.

I think there are positives, I don't want to say that there are no difficulties, that there was no Angola or something. And it is a matter we may discuss if we have time. But, despite all these difficulties, I think that the national interests of this country and of my country dictate that we must try to find solutions to difficult problems and recognize that there are fields where our interests coincide.

Agronsky: Vladimir, do you end up feeling that *detente* is still being damaged or do you think it is surviving?

Vashedchenko: I think it is damaged, but it is not dead. It will survive and after the heat of the election campaign, we will start reasonable negotiating. For instance, take the Salt II Agreement—it is a difficult one, but this agreement is needed and it's now very difficult for this

administration to accept proposals from our country because all proposals, even those which are good for this country, will be attacked from a political point of view.

Agronsky: Vladimir, would you object if I were to say that what you are saying seems to end up with you being more of an optimist than a pessimist about these things?

Vashedchenko: I would say that I think I am an optimist. I don't want to overestimate the statement of Governor Reagan. And, of course, I know that some people may make statements just to get votes, but when they become president, they will be more sober and will consider more carefully what the government should be.

Agronsky: John?

Midgley: I was very interested in the way Vladimir concentrated on the foreign policy aspect of the campaign. I personally have a rather mixed job of explaining a phenomenon like the American presidential campaign to audiences of different nationalities—audiences that also include Americans. I watch my step.

One has to remember that the whole "circus," I'm using the word "circus" in inverted commas, does look very extravagant and confusing to foreigners. Your campaigns last much longer than anybody else's, they're much more expensive than anybody else's, and they are also very different from one state, or from one part of the country to another. It's difficult for foreigners to get the hang of how the federal principle works, how the separation of powers works. Above all the cost and complexity of the campaign reflects, of course, what I think is almost the most precious element in the American democratic system—the fact there is popular participation in the selection of the candidates. That is fairly unusual, generally speaking. European political parties fix up more or less in private who the candidate will be, and the electorate gets a choice of two. It is quite liable, however, that neither of them is the one the electorate really wants, or the one who is really representative of it.

Agronsky: Do you think our system produces the man we really want and who is representative of the best qualities we want in a president?

Midgley: I don't know that.

Agronsky: Would you make that evaluation of the Democratic primary? I'd also like to bring one point to your attention. I think figures

demonstrate that in the end, overall, only 30 to 35 per cent of the electorate participated in the primary voting.

Midgley: Well, I was not thinking of it from the point of selecting the man with the best policies. Seriously, democracy consists of rather more than that. It needs to find somebody who is compatible with the general public mood at the time.

Agronsky: But does that happen, John?

Midgley: Now, if you look at American politics for the past eight years, beginning at least with 1968, the year of that ghastly Democratic convention in Chicago, I think you will see that following the events of the 1960's, there has been a considerable estrangement of the people from the political establishment in this country.

Had we had the European system, the established political figures, and I'm not going to name them, would have soldiered on. And, I suppose you eventually would have arrived at the situation not dissimilar to that in France in the spring of 1958 when, the prime minister, whom the public had practically not heard of, resigned and another, whom the public had practically not heard of, took his place. And while this was going on, there was a revolt in Algiers. When the new prime minister was installed, he found his authority had mysteriously drained away. The country had ceased to take any notice of its established political leaders. In France or in Britain or in Germany there really is no arrangement by which an outsider, say a Wendell Wilkie or a Jimmy Carter, can take charge of the government without first overthrowing it, without overthrowing the system as General De Gaulle did.

This is why I think primary elections are useful and important. I know they are a nuisance and expensive. But the fact that not everybody votes in the primary election is not, I think, that significant. These are intra-party affairs, and the people who feel they have active party affiliations, or who feel strongly about the matter, go and vote. And, I think the process by which Mr. Carter emerged did reflect, not his personal superiority over say Mr. Udall or Mr. Humphrey (though I do respect his personal qualities) but the fact that this country was fed up and determined, if it could, to have somebody different. And it has got somebody different and it has accomplished it without armed insurrection. This, I think is a valuable and useful thing. It is difficult to explain to foreigners, however, and I don't know whether I made a job of it explaining it to you.

Now, one thing that strikes me as interesting and exotic—that is, it is not associated with my own haunts and pastures at all,—is the rela-

tively greater self-consciousness of the press and the greater awareness of the press as an industry. I almost said "an institution," but I regard it as an industry. It is largely discussed in the United States, however, as if it were an institution, what its responsibilities and its possibilities are, without much relation to promotional considerations.

Agronsky: A simplistic question, John. Has the press, the media if you like, done a good job?

Midgley: Well, we have to be comparative. The press has been doing a much better job this year than it did in 1972, or in 1968. I think this is not altogether accidental and is connected with the estrangement which I mentioned. I don't know whether any of you remember, but Bob Wood, when he was under Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, delivered a famous lecture in Lincoln, Mass., in 1967 in which he warned the intellectuals, the affluent, cultivated suburbanites, against trying to press on with social improvement without the consent and concurrence of the what he called the "working American majority."

Bob's theme "the working American" was really taken up by Joe Kraft in 1968 after the Democratic national convention when he was impressed by its carnage and hostility. And there was a mood—in a column Kraft said the press ought to make an effort to understand middle America—and later some of the greater newspapers tried to re-establish some sort of communication and understanding between themselves and ordinary people.

Again, this is all exotic to me because it took a very exotic form. The New York Times and the Washington Post started hiring psychologists and survey people, and doing systematic surveys of the answers people gave to questions in different parts of the country. It was as if an anthropological expedition were being undertaken, you see. And it did have results, because the press reached 1972 with a much better idea of what people were thinking and thinking about. Unfortunately, in 1972 the press, by and large, failed to look under the bed, so that the whole story, the political story of 1972, Watergate, did not really appear in the press until 1973. Still, this process of examination has gone on. I've picked up one or two transcripts of the CBS evening specials on the primaries, and it is notable that they not only had people with the candidates but they also had Roger Mudd giving results of the Roper Survey they undertook jointly with *The New York Times*. My feeling is that today there is a much greater realism in politics.

I would like to make one more point. The press has been criticized for giving disproportionate attention to particular events in the campaign. And I agree that it is somewhat absurd for the fate of the country to first depend on the Republican or Democratic voters in New

Hampshire. Perhaps the extreme example of this was the amount of attention the press gave in January to the Iowa caucuses, which are not in themselves great mass manifestations. But I'm not joining those criticisms. We do know, although we didn't know it then, that about a year in advance of the Iowa caucuses when Mr. Carter's people were setting up his political calendar, evolving a campaign strategy, they recalled that one of the moments in which McGovern came from behind so smartly in 1972 was the Iowa caucuses. They advised Carter to pay attention to the Iowa caucuses. When he did and got the results he wanted, it told the smarter political journalists that here was a man who knew how to go about it. Others say that this is evidence of the press exercising arbitrary power, but it seems to me that Mr. Carter was using the press, not the other way around. Having calculated that a certain event could make a certain effect, he arranged to get the event to go his way. And the press quite rightly paid respectable attention, because this was one of the early signs that Mr. Carter was a master of the political game. So I think this is not an adverse comment on how the press operates.

Just one last remark, we, the British, are inclined to draw analogies from British politics, British political history, and we're very good at advising Americans how they should follow our example. One of my colleagues, a distinguished colleague, had an article in the *Post* maybe two or three months ago in which he recalled the good advice given by H.A. Balfour and Harold Macmillan. They contended that the opposition should not have, should not enunciate, a policy in an election campaign, but instead should attack the policies of the government. And that would result in countering bloc votes to the government and then the opposition would win.

This seems almost a classic example of an analogy that does not apply, that is not helpful. First, it takes no account of the separation of powers. It takes no account of the multifarious character of the American party system. If I can simplify, a British voter who is invited to choose between the Labor man and the Tory, knows roughly what these people stand for, what their association is, and what kind of general philosophy they would bring into the government if they should win. It is not at all obvious that you perceive the American political process as a contest between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. It is not a bit obvious which is the government and which is the opposition, really. It is also not obvious what the philosophies of the candidates are going to be. This is conspiciously so in the case of Mr. Carter who, as I have said, had to be an unknown and therefore has to spell himself out. The pressure on him is to do that, and he's doing it. If one were forced to draw an analogy between British politics and the present contest, which one is the government, which one is the opposi-

tion? I would say Mr. Ford is in the position of the government and Mr. Reagan is in the position of the opposition.

Agronsky: Thank you, John. Now, Carl I wonder if you could address yourself not only to the kind of reporting you do, but also to how you evaluate the process. I thought some of the observations Mr. Vashedchenko made might have interested you, and you might take this opportunity to deal with them, too.

Weiss: Well, the present German government and the opposition are in such an enormous state of harmony with American foreign policy that it is almost a distress for a correspondent here. Our government, out of natural bureaucratic laziness, would have preferred, up to the last four or six weeks, to have everything as it is in the White House and not have to get used to new faces. But right now, obviously, the Schmidt people and the Carter people see pretty much eye to eye. And even what you might call the line between Jackson and Reagan has its counterparts in German opposition. So when I look at this election year, I don't see very much substance with which to quarrel with the view of the world presented by the leading American politicians. If you don't mind, Martin, I'd rather continue where John ended. Because most of the things he said, I subscribe to.

You will not be surprised that German correspondents find your primary process and your electoral process slightly untidy. So many things aren't properly defined by law. It accounts probably for the large amount of unaccustomed fun you seem to have here. But still, my personal approach when the whole thing started and everybody said, "O God there will be 30 states to cover this year," is very close to Senator Mondale's, before he was reborn as a vice-presidential candidate. I really believe, based on traveling from time to time with the candidates and mainly from an early and highly impressive article in *The New Yorker* describing the days and nights of Mr. Udall, that the process puts too much stress, physical stress, on the candidates. Most of them are older than I am, and I just can't see how they cope. So much stress from six o'clock in the morning to two o'clock in the morning. I can't help thinking, when, for heaven's sake, do they ever think? So for untidiness.

I am puzzled by the fact that these delegates who are eventually sitting in two convention halls are delegates of very different weights, as well. Some are representing voters, some are representing something in between, some are representing, well you know. On the other side, this part is relatively easy for me to explain to the German public because we are a federation. And we run through 11 different elections. So a federated structure is familiar, it's one we have working. Unfamiliar remains the structure of the parties. John's touched on it. I

think my greatest problem in translating and interpreting is to explain what the Democrats and the Republicans are. Our parties, our two large parties, are a coalition but still, as John said in his remarks about the British parties, our parties are very, very similar in strength as well as in tradition. I don't know whether it is such a good thing that a politician in your country is supposed to be an expert on every issue—an expert on housing, an expert on abortions—which isn't necessarily logical. But that's how they are expected to be, and that's how most of them are.

Midgley: Could I put in a word, Carl? It seems to me the fact that in Germany, as in Britain, the chief executive, the chancellor or prime minister, is elected by parliament, is responsible to parliament, and in consequence controls parliament, creates a unity of aspect between the parties as they present themselves to the country. You know which one is the government, and you know which one is the opposition. Whereas, you have the Democrats going as the majority in Congress but not in possession of the White House. That is one of the things that Europeans, by and large, find it hardest to get hold of.

Matsuyama: That is true with Japanese parties also.

Weiss: You are quite right. I think it all boils down to the necessity to repeat again and again the ethnic variety of the U.S., its geographic distances, and all the other diversities if we are to make our peoples understand the complexities of this procedure. Apart from that, I've examined the outcome of the Democratic primaries so far and, in retrospect, the fact that Mr. Carter won seems to be absolutely natural. And one wonders whether the 11 other Democratic contenders really ever had a chance. But this may be the enormous impact primaries have. Once the guy wins, he looks believable. I don't know.

Now, I started reporting this process only a few years ago, so I don't have much more experience than the 1972 election. I was fascinated then with the process and the new awareness of the "Boys on the Bus." You know, an awareness that the mass media may meddle too much in the actual procedure. I've been watching their performance with great fascination. Also, there is still this fabulous obsession with detail about the American parties of this political period. Sometimes I've asked myself whether details aren't flooding the picture.

Agronsky: Maybe they do.

Weiss: I don't understand it but I am endlessly fascinated by the interrelationship of predictions and of results during the primaries.

Candidates are asked a hundred times, "How do you expect to win?" And that creates its own yardstick. Sometimes one says, "I'll be about second." Of course, an opinion poll, Gallup, would look much tidier. Still I'm impressed by the way the American public, knowing long before what the Pennsylvania mood is or its mood towards candidate X—bursts into excitement when 25 per cent of the voters have spoken because this was the real thing, not just a poll. I like it.

Agronsky: Let's hear from our Japanese colleague, who's had the good fortune, or the misfortune, to find that while we have had a president in Watergate, he has had a prime minister caught in a similar scandal. I wonder if he sees any other parallels between the Japanese and the American system?

Matsuyama: Unfortunately what is popular or rampant in this country, sooner or later becomes popular or rampant in Japan. Coca-Cola, jeans, high inflation, air pollution, all are now popular in Japan. The only exceptions are hard drugs and women's lib. At the same time, I feel a little hesitant to comment on American politics because I have made quite a few mistakes in judging the American political scene for the past 15 years.

In 1962, when Mr. Nixon was defeated by Governor Brown of California and declared he would never again seek political office, I filed a story to Asahi, my paper, that he would never come back again to the political arena.

Agronsky: Let me tell you, you had a lot of company.

Matsuyama: And then, 10 years later when Watergate became the hottest issue, the hottest scandal in the history of American politics, I wrote that Mr. Nixon would never resign, given his personality. Last year, I predicted that the Democratic presidential candidate for the 1976 election would be either Humphrey or Jackson, without referring to the possibility of Jimmy Carter.

Agronsky: You're setting a terrible precedent here. We don't go around talking about all of our mistakes.

Matsuyama: Therefore, my wife warns me at all times against pretending to be an expert on American politics—I'm not. Hence, I came here today because I wanted to talk about the unreasonableness of the American presidential system, the presidential election.

First, I must tell you that I was in Tokyo during the so-called occupation era when every Japanese believed that American democracy was

the most advanced and most reasonable system in law. Actually, the occupation forces used to point out some of the unreasonableness of Japanese society in politics and try to transform them into a more reasonable Japan. But, since first coming to this country some 15 years ago, some rather unreasonable aspects of American politics have been weighing heavily upon my mind. In particular, the more I cover presidential elections, the more I find the electoral process difficult.

Take the primaries, for example. We don't understand why the American press covers so fully and frankly a primary in such a small state as New Hampshire, which does not indicate how the country is likely to vote. A number of years ago, I accompanied Governor Rockefeller and Senator Goldwater up to New Hampshire to cover the primary, which ended in a victory for Ambassador Lodge, who did not intend to run since he was in South Vietnam. It's only by tradition that the primary is first held in New Hampshire, thus exercising a large influence upon the succeeding primary. This year, if Governor Reagan had won 700 more votes and won over Mr. Ford in New Hampshire, the result of the Florida primary would have been worse and President Ford would have given up running for the presidency. This is nonsense. Do you think that the state of New Hampshire, whose population is only 0.3 portion of the entire United States and where less than one per cent of the residents are black people, represents the mainstream of the United States? I wonder why people in New York, or California or Texas don't become curious, don't get upset because such candidates as Shriver, Benson or Baker have been eliminated from the race even before New Yorkers, Californians or Texans have been consulted. Many American newspaper stories counted Governor Reagan out of the race, right after the New Hampshire and the Florida primaries. But Governor Reagan was not ready to be tossed out as a hopeless case. Why doesn't the American press wait a little more patiently to see what *all* the American people have to say? Soon each primary, each separate state of the union. . .

Agronsky: Because their editors and their employers don't let them.

Matsuyama: Isn't a large segment of the American people being deprived of their due right because of the way the primaries are conducted and because of the way they are reported in the American press? In addition, I wish to point out that the primaries last too long, and that physical stamina is regarded as more important than a candidate's intelligence, or decency, or personality.

And yet Professor Arthur Schlesinger Jr. recently observed that the primaries are nothing. The system is out of control. Just imagine that the primaries in California and New Jersey were held on the same day. How could each candidate wage an effective campaign? Furthermore,

it should be noted that many primaries still take on more the atmosphere of a publicity campaign for a new Coca-Cola than that of a serious political event. So often what is crucial is not what the candidate says, but how he says it.

At a time when charisma is no longer regarded as indispensable for a statesman in almost all other countries, why is it that Americans apparently still look eagerly for charisma in each candidate? The American press seems to pursue most avidly the candidate with the most charisma, which has nothing to do with the capacity to solve the complicated problems of inflation, deflation, disarmament, overpopulation, energy and so forth. Of course, I know there are many merits in the primary system, particularly because those freshmen who have no connections whatsoever with Washington have a chance to run and to win openly. Frankly, I must confess that I prefer this system both to the Japanese one which is controlled by political bosses, or to the Communist system where people can learn about the changes in the party hierarchy only through the reviewing stand at military parades, or funerals, or party events.

But at a time when the American president is in effect the leader of the Western world, shouldn't Americans take a more critical look at the election system? For an observer, Americans appear to see Watergate only as a spectacular scandal caused by an abnormally immoral politician named Nixon. But, who or what gave him the landslide in the 1972 election? I feel strongly that Nixon was the necessary product of more than American politics. And it is not Nixon, but the American system, particularly the election system, that should be blamed and indicted.

In a sense, it is only natural that foreign customs or systems seem unreasonable to foreigners. Our family name comes first, while yours comes last. The more lavishly your wives dress up in this country, the less they tend to wear. In Japan, the more the women dress up the more they must cover their skin. I shall not say exactly which I prefer, but I don't object to these differences. As far as the election system of the United States president is concerned, however, I believe it can't be too reasonable—and it should be more reasonable.

Agronsky: Thank you for that very perceptive and constructively critical evaluation. I'm going to be a good moderator and bite my tongue and not try to answer it myself. We have a gentleman, George Reedy, in the audience who is eminently suited to respond to some of the observations you have made.

Reedy: Martin, I just have two or three comments. The most striking thing to me, is that these gentlemen have really made just about the same analyses that a group of American correspondents would have

made and this leads me to wonder about two things. First, have they been in this country too long? And second, is it a question of a special relationship?

The part of the world I know best outside the United States is Latin America. I don't think any Latin American correspondent would have made the analysis made by any of those gentlemen because of a certain special relationship in which Latin Americans look at everything from the standpoint of, "What is the United States getting set to do to Latin America?"

But a couple of things intrigued me. First, like most American correspondents, there was a decrying of the tendency of the American press and the American people to look for charisma rather than to analyze the content of what leaders are saying. The concept is that charisma really isn't very important, that what is important is the content of the speeches. And I wonder if any of these gentlemen have ever analyzed the content of the speeches and then analyzed the actions of the candidates after they get elected? I think this is one of those things where a certain folk wisdom is really superior to the analysis of intellectuals. The American people learned a long time ago that political speeches are intended for impact and nothing else.

A famous example, of course, is that of Mr. Roosevelt who was going to cut government spending by 25 per cent, then within three or four weeks after he was elected, called in one of his advisers and asked him how he could explain that speech. He replied, "The only way that you can explain it, Mr. Roosevelt, is to deny you ever made it." And when we are talking about charisma, I think that's a very much abused word. What it really means is capacity to lead, an apparent capacity to lead, which really has everything to do with whether the problems can or cannot be solved.

Agronsky: Is that your folk wisdom, George, or perception?

Reedy: I think there is a certain folk wisdom here that the American people have become accustomed to their political system and recognize that speeches are merely devices to attract attention. You know, like a gimmick a carnival barker uses. Politicians make speeches not to present policies, or say what they are going to do after they are elected, because they are not going to do it after they are elected because the world looks quite differently then. They do it to attract attention to themselves.

I think what the American people do really is examine these candidates, and examine them under a great deal of strain and stress. The stress does not bother me in the slightest. I think the stress is good, because after several months of this mindless plodding from town to

town, they forget what all the PR types have taught them. They forget about all the gimmicks that have been explained to them by motivational researchers and pollsters. And all of a sudden, you discover that there is something inside them besides a series of press releases.

The big thing about the American campaign, and again there is a form of folk wisdom involved here, is that it is a kind of a trial by ordeal. It's one of those things in which men are put through a grooming process. In which somewhere along the line, they are going to reveal what they really are. And I think an effort to analyze these campaigns from an intellectual standpoint—shouldn't we have something like Lincoln-Douglas debates or something of that nature?—really is beside the point as to the process and how it works.

The other point I would like to make—I think you, Martin, asked whether this produces the best person available—No, I don't think it does because I don't know what the best person available is. Gary Wills made a very perceptive remark when he said that the American political system does not necessarily produce the best man for the job, but it always produces, and I think it does, an appropriate man for the times. Mr. Midgely, had an excellent point when he indicated that what you are really trying to do is to find somebody compatible with the basic currents. What happens when you have no consensus in the United States and the basic currents are confused? I think if we examine our history and put the presidential candidates in the context of the times and the feelings people had, the whole process suddenly begins to make a lot more sense.

My final word. I am very intrigued, having just come back from Latin America, to find these correspondents all, in effect, thinking the same way American correspondents would think.

Agronsky: George, is that good or bad?

Reedy: I don't know if it's good or bad, it's just an interesting point because the journalists that I have been dealing with in Latin America have looked upon this campaign almost entirely with a different perspective. To them, the outstanding fact was that Mr. Reagan won so many primaries on the Panama Canal issue, which again was proof to them that the United States once again was mobilizing to put its heel on the nose of Latin America. And I think you are going to find that in that part of the world, the analysis is going to be something like the famous story of the Englishman, the American, the Frenchman, the Pole and the German who agreed to write a book on elephants. A year later when they came back, the Frenchman had written, "The Love Life of the Elephant"; the Englishman, "Elephants I Have Shot"; the American, "Bigger and Better Elephants," the German, a 2,000 word tome

entitled "A Short Introduction on the Morphology of Elephants"; and the Pole, "Elephants in Relationship to the Polish Question."

Agronsky: We were going to relate to each other after everybody had had his say. But I think all of you would probably appreciate it if we related to you, and I would like to encourage any of you who would like to raise questions or make observations to address them to any one of us. Anyone in the audience? Yes?

Question. (Indistinguishable)

Agronsky: That's quite a question. You mean in relation to the coverage of the political campaign? I'll encourage any one of my colleagues to respond to that—would you like to?

Vashedchenko: It's a difficult question. My impression is that the American press is very, very proud. It influences public opinion very much. And, I would say the press and media in general are responsible for the whole thinking of the American people. I've had a chance to speak with different Americans and it's very easy to detect that people are under the influence of mass media to a considerable degree.

Agronsky: I'd like to ask you if you think that they exercise this very responsible power responsibly, in your opinion?

Vashedchenko: I would say, in general, "Yes." But, the press sometimes pays too much attention perhaps to trivialities and not enough to analyzing the growth of a problem. I think the American press may lay off a story to the extent that it does not dig and does not find the cause of a problem and explain it.

I will touch upon one problem which I did not discuss during my introductory remarks, just for comparison and for showing the role of the press. Angola. Angola is a difficult international problem. There was a clash between the Soviet Union and this country, between this country and Cuba, and the American press published a lot of stories about Angola. And the general impression has been that there were two countries which interfered in Angola and changed everything, the Soviet Union and Cuba. But if we look objectively at what happened in Angola, I think we would recognize that there was interference from the Cubans, some people from Cuba are there, and there was political, economic and military support from the Soviet Union. There was also interference in Angola by the United States. This is not a secret. It was discussed in Congress, and the White House asked for additional

money for continuing the interference. But, this side of American interference in Angola was played down.

Agronsky: I disagree with you. It wasn't played down. It was rather extensively reported. It precipitated debates in Congress. It brought from the Secretary of State many expressions of regret that Congress wouldn't go along with American policy. There was a wide examination and an extensive debate. I wonder why you say it was played down? I think it was widely and exhaustively covered. Am I wrong?

Vashedchenko: My view is that it was played down. It was reported, that's right, but it was played down and the main intent was to focus on the Soviet Union s intervention there.

I just mention this as one e ample of when I think American press did something which did not necessarily reflect what was actually going on, what was really happening. Just as I know from the stories in the American press, for instance, about the amount of money spent by the Soviet Union in Portugal. Figures are given without any hard evidence. So my view, critically, and you asked me to say what is wrong with the American press, is that it is powerful, it influences very much. Also I very often disagree with the way the American press reports one or another event, and I dare say that sometimes it is not objective in reporting some of them, especially if they concern relations with my country.

Agronsky: John would you agree?

Midgely: No, I don't think I agree. We have a rather special case here in which the governments, at least the executive branches of the two countries, have a large common interest in not rocking the boat of relations between them and also a number of fields in which their interests conflict. What's the press to do in such a situation? It does have an obligation, if it finds out something which its own government, its own executive department, doesn't want known, — it has an obligation to dig into that, and explain and report it to the public, which I think the press did in the matter of Angola.

The press also has an obligation to report the utterances of the people in charge of the government of the country. So that if, say, Mr. Kissinger, though he would not be the only spokesman in this case, wants the public to understand that the Soviet Union is interfering grossly, unacceptably, in Angola and he wishes that the U.S. government had rather more freedom to do something about it, then I don't think it's illegitimate that the press should report that, too. It really has to.

There's probably an underlying difference between us. That is that it would come naturally to a member of the Soviet branch of our profession to regard the press primarily as a policy making body with public responsibilities. Now, I regard the press primarily as an industry which certainly has an obligation to provide the public service. Its readers are entitled to that, but if we think of the press as existing primarily for policy making purposes, then I think we're always going to be disappointed. Because we don't understand what it is that actually makes editors and reporters write what they write, and travel where they do, and pick the subjects that they do. So there is an incompatibility in the view about the function of the press in society, because the function of the press in the Soviet society is quite different from that in American society.

Agronsky: Yukio?

Matsuyama: I wish to answer a few questions differently. Japanese politics is quite similar to American politics in many respects, particularly in terms of the influence, the impact of the press. Compared with the Japanese press, the American press is a little more partisan. The Japanese press is totally independent and non-partisan. We were rather disappointed with the New Hampshire newspapers which were too conservative during the primaries. So as an ideal, in case executives of the American press were to ask the looking glass, "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, which are the fairest papers in the world"? The mirror might answer, "You are fair, but the Japanese papers are fairer."

Agronsky: Carl?

Weiss: I think the strength of the American press is its great lack of respect for authority, and on the other side, its great respect for facts, figures and quotes. I consider the American press vastly superior in the actual profession of its craft—professionalism and artisanship—transmission of news, and all that.

I think its greatest weakness is that it is too news-oriented, too crisis-oriented. It just drops whole areas of issues, or regions in the world when there is no trouble. We had an overexposure of Southeast Asia for years and now it's gone, it's disappeared from the picture, and that is true also for Latin America under some Madame Peron No. 2, 3 or 4, because it's just not topical. So, you take up things whenever they have a news aspect. One could philosophize now for a long time about our definition of news, which I see as evolving mainly from local reporting. But, is it good enough for reporting foreign policy? Is it not an instru-

ment much too primitive? Whenever there's a news aspect, you pick it up, and if there's none, you forget about it at once.

Agronsky: We'd like very much to go on, but we've not only run out of time, we've run overtime. I'd like to thank my colleagues for their very useful and productive insights into the way foreign correspondents see this country, how they see our political electoral process. We appreciate very much your frankness, and your observations. Thank you.